

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT M 00433 070721Z

21

ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0433

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PP

SUBJECT: BOUGAINVILLE DISPUTE FLARES

1. ON APRIL 26 SOMARE ATTEMPTED DEFINE CURRENT STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN PNG AND BOUGAINVILLE LEADERS IN RADIO ADDRESS. HE INDICATED REESTABLISHMENT OF BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL GOVT (BPG), ELECTION OF BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL GOVT ASSEMBLY IN JULY, AND BI-ELECTIONS FOR SEATS IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENT PREVIOUSLY HELD BY FR. MOMIS AND RAPHAEL BELE WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PNG CONSTITUTION OR UNDER NATIONAL PARLIAMENT LEGISLATION AND THAT RESULT WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NORTH SOLOMON REPUBLIC.

2. BOUGAINVILLE REACTION TO SOMARE'S REMARKS WAS VOICED BY MOMIS IN 28 APRIL SPEECH IN WHICH HE WARNED THAT TROUBLE WOULD ERUPT ON ISLAND IF CENTRAL GOVT TRIED TO FORCE ITS VIEWS ON BOUGAINVILLE, AND THAT THE PROPOSAL TO HOLD BI-ELECTIONS WOULD FORCE THE PEOPLE OF BOUGAINVILLE TO ACCEPT AND SUPPORT PNG CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM WHICH THEY HAVE OPPOSED. HE ASSERTED THAT THE GPNG HAD BEEN INFORMED THAT BOUGAINVILLE DID NOT WANT BI-ELECTIONS BUT "IT SEEMS THEY ARE BEING FORCED UPON US". MOMIS STATED THAT BOUGAINVILLE LEADERS HAD ACCEPTED RESTORATION OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT BY PNG PARLIAMENT

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PORT M 00433 070721Z

ONLY IN ORDER TO ALLOW NEGOTIATIONS TO COMMENCE, AND OBJECTED

TO SOMARE'S CASTING THE MATTER IN THE CONTEXT OF PNG'S CONSTITUTION. HE CONCLUDED THAT IF SOMARE CONTINUED TO ADOPT THE ATTITUDE SUGGESTED IN THE RADIO BROADCAST THAT HE (MOMIS) COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT TALKS WOULD CONTINUE.

3. IN A SECOND ADDRESS ON THE 29TH SOMARE INDICATED THAT HIS INTENTION WAS ONLY TO INFORM THE PEOPLE OF BOUGAINVILLE OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, NOT FINAL SOLUTIONS WHICH WILL ONLY BE ARRIVED AT AFTER LENGTHY NEGOTIATIONS. HE STATED "ALTHOUGH THE IMPRESSION GIVEN IN MY SPEECH MAY HAVE BEEN WRONG, THE FACTS OF THE SPEECH WERE CORRECT."

4. THE PRESS DIALOGUE CONTINUED WITH A STATEMENT ON MAY 2 BY THE PANGUNA MUNGKAS ASSN (A BOUGAINVILLE SOCIAL AND WELFARE GROUP, A MAJORITY OF WHICH HAS SECESSIONIST VIEWS) THREATENING A NEW BOUGAINVILLE UPRISING IF THE GOVERNMENT FORCES BI-ELECTIONS WHICH THEY DESCRIBED AS "AN INTRUSION AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF BOUGAINVILLE." THE GROUP STATED THAT THE ONLY ELECTIONS WHICH THE BOUGAINVILLE PEOPLE SUPPORT ARE THOSE SCHEDULED FOR MID-JULY FOR AN INTERIM BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL GOVT "BUT EVEN THIS BODY SHOULD ONLY OPERATE UNTIL A HOME GROWN SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IS ESTABLISHED ON BOUGAINVILLE WITH FULL INDEPENDENCE."

5. THE FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS IN THE PM'S OFFICE HAS INFORMED US THAT BOUGAINVILLE LEADERS HAVE BEEN TELLING THEIR PEOPLE THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS COMMENCING IN JANUARY WERE BETWEEN THE GPNG AND THE REPUBLIC OF THE NORTH SOLOMONS. SOMARE'S STATEMENT UNDERCUT THEM BY DEFINING THE ISSUES IN TERMS OF AN INTERIM PROVINCIAL GOVT ESTABLISHED UNDER THE PNG CONSTITUTION, AND LEGISLATION OF THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT. PRESUMABLY THE BOUGAINVILLE LEADERS DO NOT OBJECT TO THE PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS (IN CONTRAST TO THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT BY ELECTIONS) BECAUSE THEY WILL PROVIDE FOR A DEGREE OF LEGITIMACY THAT THE APPOINTED BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY HAS NEVER PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED. WE ALSO LEARNED THAT THE INITIATIVE TO HOLD BI-ELECTIONS FOR THE VACANT PARLIAMENTARY SEATS CAME FROM THE PNG ELECTORAL COMMISSION WITHOUT REFERENCE TO BOUGAINVILLE WORKING GROUP. SOMARE IS NOT INCLINED TO UNDERCUT HIS ELECTION COMMISSIONER WHO IS FOLLOWING PNG

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PORT M 00433 070721Z

CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS. IF THERE ARE FEW OR NO NOMINATIONS FOR THE VACANT SEATS THE BI-ELECTIONS MAY BE INDEFINITELY POSTPONED THEREBY RESOLVING THE PROBLEM.

COMMENT: THIS ENTIRE DISPUTE AS REPORTED IN THE PRESS APPEARS TO BE CONVOLUTED, CONFUSING AND LACKING IN SUBSTANCE. UNDERLYING THE DEBATE HOWEVER IS THE UNWILLINGNESS OF THE BOUGAINVILLE LEADERS TO ABANDON BOUGAINVILLE'S SECESSIONIST AIMS

PUBLICALLY IN RETURN FOR THE CONSIDERABLE CONCESSIONS GRANTED DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS BY THE GPNG. SOMARE IS INSISTING THAT THE BOUGAINVILLE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THAT FROM THE GPNG VIEWPOINT, NO REPUBLIC OF THE NORTH SOLOMONS EXISTS, AND THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE PNG CONSTITUTION AND A UNITED PAPUA NEW GUINEA. THE LARGER IMPLICATIONS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION ARE REPORTED SEPTEL. OLMSTED

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